

Finals & Ends (a Space Academy Story)

by Mea

Category: Voltron

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2000-06-28 08:00:00

Updated: 2000-06-28 08:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 20:31:39

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 7,929

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Set in a time before the Voltron series, as graduation draws near, the cadets prepare for finals as the universe changes around them... Reviews welcome

Finals & Ends (a Space Academy Story)

> <meta name="GENERATOR"> Finals & Ends FORWARD by the author:

I'd like to think that this story can stand on its own, but it helps if you are at

>least passingly familiar with the Voltron series of the 80's, both the lions and the
vehicle version. Chronologically, this story takes place before those series, but

>features characters from both shows, as well as some of my own creation. It
would also help if you've read my previous story, "J's Hut", as one of the

>characters is introduced there. <p>

Comments & Criticism welcome.

> "Finals and Endings"
 A Space Academy Story

> By: Mea

"...But I HATE finals!"

> "Sorry Ginger, but for one, I have to agree with you, " said

Mira as she flopped herself down on her bed and reached for the

>open bag of pretzels. "So, who're we still waiting for?"
 "Cinda and Lauren said they were on their way," answered

>Lisa from behind the "Galactic History: Part 3" study guide she

was reading.

> "At least these are our last finals EVER," said Dawn, a

dark-skinned girl from Planet Noove. "If we survive these, we're

>done except for graduation."
 "IF we survive them," Mira said
darkly, and popped another

>pretzel in her mouth.
 "At least you don't have to worry," her roommate Ginger
>said. "Your grades are great! What are you now... number four
in the class?"
> Mira's face reddened a bit. "Ummm..."
 "Third," Dawn cut in. "She just beat out Lance on the last
>bio test."
 "No!"
> "Dawn grinned and looked expectantly at Mira, who
reluctantly nodded a confirmation.
> "Mira!" said Ginger, "That's great!"
 "What did Lance say?" Lisa pressed, "How'd he take it?"
> Mercifully, before she could answer, there was a knock at
the door.
> "Come in."
 The door opened, ushering in two girls. One had pale skin
>speckled with freckles and short coppery red hair trimmed

immaculately. The other had the light blue skin, darker blue
>hair, and exotic eyes that marked her as being Argusinian. Though

it was a race somewhat new to the Galaxy Alliance, several
>Argusinians had already been accepted into the Space Academy.
 "Lauren! Cinda! Cool, we can get started."
> "And look," said the redheaded one holding up a small bag,
"We brought chocolate!"
> "Lauren, you are a goddess," said Dawn. "What type?"
 "Saturn's Assorted."
> "Dibs on the Crunch Clusters!"
 "Only if you get through me first."
> "Awww..."
 "Hey, I brought them!"
> "GUYS!" Mira's voice interrupted them. "C'mon, we've got a

history exam to cram for. Shouldn't we get started BEFORE the
>test starts?"
 "And besides," she added as the two late-comers settled in,
>"if I don't get at least one Saturn Toffee Chew, I'm kicking you

all out of my room."
> "Don't you mean, 'our' room?" Ginger corrected.
 "Oh I'll kick anyone out who gets between me and the toffee
>chews," Mira joked. "Okay people. Where shall we begin?"
 + + +
> "Name the president who sanctioned the Second Great
Expansion?"
> "Oh that's easy. The president of the Commonwealth of
Terran Planets."
> "The name?"
 "Well, if you want to get picky about it..." shrugged Boyd,
>quite possibly one of the most unusual cadets in the entire Space

Academy. No one knew what his real hair color was, it seemed to
>change weekly. Today, his closely cropped hair was red: not a

natural orangey-brown or caramel color, but a bright cherry red.
>He had numerous tatoos, souvenirs of a time before the Academy,

including one that was almost his trademark because he liked to
>show it off - a smiley face with a laser hole through its

forehead. No one could quite figure out why he had not been
>expelled for his strange, unregulation looks, and many gave up

trying to explain it years ago.

> "They're going to want to know that," said Cliff, who's room

the group was sharing.

> "Yeah," his roommate Lance chimed in. "They kinda like
things like names, locations, exact dates. The unimportant

>stuff."
 "Is anyone going to TRY to answer my question?" pressed

>Pidge from his perch on one of the beds.
 "Whuf if Freffiden Wefmera?" said Rocky though a mouthful of

>pizza.
 "What was that?"

> Rocky swallowed hard. "I said, 'Was it President Romera'?"

"You got it Rocky," said Pidge, "Ready for another one?"

> "Pizza?" said Hunk, reaching for the half empty box of

thick-crust pepperoni, "Sure!"

> Before he could grab it, Pidge snatched it away.
 "PIDGE!"

> "Question first, then pizza."
 "Geez!"

> "Okay, who lead the CTW Fleet in -"
 "Clint Shelby, now gimmie the box!"

> Pidge looked at him, then his notes, back at him, and then

reluctantly gave him the pizza.

> Lance laughed. "Hunk's going to ace this test if someone
gets a double pepperoni during the final."

> "No kidding," his roommate agreed. "Hey, didn't you say Sven
and Keith were coming?"

> "Nah. It's Thursday, Sven's got Tai Chi, and Keith..." a bit
of a smirk spread over his face. "Keith went to surprise Emily."

> Just about everyone's jaw dropped.
 Boyd was the first to find his voice. "OUR Keith?"

> Lance nodded.
 "And Emily... He's gettin' it on with THAT Emily?"

> Another nod.
 "That sly dog! I didn't know he had it in 'im!"

> The group started laughing and howling; they didn't notice
that Lance only half-heartedly joined in.

> + + + +
 He was nervous, more nervous than he had been on his first

>day at the Academy, or on his first solo flight, or anything.

His collar felt tight and his mouth was dry and parts of him felt

>like they were getting tiny electric shocks.
 Keith had never tried to surprise Emily before; usually she

>was the spontaneous one. That was something he'd always admired

in her; the way she could be unpredictable and free and enjoy

>every moment of life... he wished he had her kind of spirit.

They'd been together for two months as of that day. She'd

>made such a big deal out of their first month anniversary, but

this one seemed to have almost snuck by unnoticed. She'd never

>expect this, he thought to himself as he rearranged the roses in

the bouquet for the third time, trying to pick the perfect angle

>to present them. He could almost imagine her face when she saw

them; her eyes, her smile...

> Then he'd tell her his decision to sign onto the S.S.
Blackmoor with her. It would probably cost him a guaranteed

>officer's position, but he wasn't going to tell her that. He

didn't even care. It was the craziest thing he'd ever done; his

>father would have a fit when he found out...
 He still didn't

care. He'd do anything for Emily, and
>tonight he was going to tell her so.
 Before he realized it, he
was at her door. He stared at it,
>biting his lower lip, gathering his courage as best he could.

Words that he'd rehearsed over and over since he made his

>decision that morning tumbled around in his head like leaves in a

storm. He hid the bouquet behind his back, took a deep and

>ragged breath, reached out with his free hand, knocked, and took

a step back.
> He could do this. He could do this...
 There was a sound of
movement on the other side of the door,
>a muffled voice that sounded like " Just a minute", more

movement... Keith shifted nervously on his heels, his heart

>pounding like an air hammer. He heard the snap of a lock

delatch, and the door opened a crack.
> Emily poked her head out: it looked like she'd been
sleeping.
Her blond hair was mussed, and she wore a simple terry
>cloth robe she clutched close at the top. When she saw him, she

looked surprised, but it wasn't the kind of "happy" surprised he

>had expected.
 "Keith, what are you doing here?" she asked in a
low tone.
>Maybe it was his imagination, but there was a tinge of annoyance

in her voice.
> "I thought.. Umm" he began lamely, his practiced speech gone
in
an instant. "That is.. Well, since you said you wanted to
>stay home and study, I thought I'd sur-"
 "Emmy, who's that?" a
new voice interrupted behind her.
> A male voice.
 In that moment, it felt as if an icicle had
stabbed him in
>the chest.
 Emily looked over her shoulder and replied " It's
nobody."
> Another shard of ice lodged in his stomach.
 She turned around
to face him again and pulled her robe a
>little tighter closed. "Look Keith, can we talk later?"
 "No we
can't," the words slipped out before he realized it.
> "Keith... Look," Emily began, "You're sweet, but it's not
like
we were serious, or anything, right?"
> More ice ripped his insides apart.
 She tried to put her hand
on his shoulder, but he flinched
>at her touch.
 "Oh..kay," she went on, "Tomorrow, we talk about
this, all
>right..? What's that?"
 She'd noticed he was hiding something
behind his back; he'd
>been holding the flowers so tightly now some of the thorns had

broken through the wrapping and pierced his palm, but he couldn't

>feel it; he'd gone numb.
 The voice behind her interrupted
again. "Emmy, hurry up!"
> "Just a second!" she called back over her shoulder. When
she
turned around again, she saw Keith storming away from her
>back down the hall. She should have called after him, told him

something, but instead, she shrugged, shook her head, and quietly

>closed the door.
 + + + +
> "I hear Emily's got a new guy."
 "No way, are you serious
Dawn?"

> "Uh-huh," the cadet nodded. And I think it's Quinn
Saunders."

> "Quinn?" gaped Lisa.
 "Yes."

> "Quinn, the guy with no neck?" said Mira.
 "The same."

> "She dumped Keith for that jerk?" Lauren asked in disbelief.
 "That's just it. I don't think she's actually DUMPED Keith
>yet."
 "...Oh."

> "Oh my!" added Ginger.
 "And I thought men were pigs."

> "Lauren!"
 "Okay, most men."

> "Why would someone try such a deception?" Cinda asked,

genuinely curious.

> There was a pause as everyone thought about this.
 "Cinda" Mira
said at last, " I envy your people."

> "Why is that?"
 "Because they wouldn't think of doing something
like that."

> They sat quietly for a moment amid the textbooks and study

guides.

> "It's not the first time she's done this you know," Dawn
added.
"I hear she goes through guys faster than most people go
>through tissues during cold season. Some people have started

calling her 'Easy Emily'."

> "That's awful!" said Ginger.
 "But it's true," Dawn countered.

> "...You're right. But it's still awful."
 "If Keith finds out,"
said Mira, pitching a toffee crunch
>wrapper at the garbage can and missing, "It's going to kill him.

When I was his wingman last month in flight class, you should

>have seen the way he looked at her every time we were in the bay.

He was trying to hide it, but you could tell he had it bad. And

>this is Keith we're talking about here." She sighed. "He

deserves something better than that. Something more..."

> "Chaste?" said Lauren, helpfully.
 "I was going to say
'stable'."

> "Like you and Lance?" challenged Lisa. "Every time I turn

around your on again, then off, on, off, on..."

> "Off," finished Mira. "Again."
 "Oh no, what happened this
time."

> "Hey! It's not like that. We just thought maybe it's best
if we
end it now, since we're going our separate ways."

> "Separate?" Lauren asked. "I thought you were both trying
for
the Explorer."

> "I'm not."
 Everyone stared.

> "What?"
 "C'mon Mira, why not?" said Dawn. "With your marks,
you're
>practically in!"
 Mira shook her head. "Sorry guys, but I don't
want to be
>stationed on a ship, no matter how nice. I'm going to try for a

commission in a planetary defense force, I'm thinking Balto or

>Torres."
 "But why?" Dawn pressed.

> Mira laughed. "I grew up on a ship. Mom and Dad were
transport
pilots, so we spent most of our time in space. I never
>stayed more than a month in natural gravity until I came here,

and I like it. It doesn't buzz."

> "Huh?"
 "Artificial gravity kinda... buzzes," she said trying
to
>explain. "After a while you can tell what kind of ship you're on

by how the gravity feels, if there IS gravity, of course. It's

>kinda weird, but there's little differences. REAL gravity,

however, is solid. No buzz. And I want to enjoy that a little

>longer... Hey, it's not like I'm throwing my career away, I'm

just not spending any more time stationed in space."
> "Well..."
 "Okay, since you're so interested in my future,
let's hear
>your plans? Hmm?"
 "Me?" said Dawn, realizing that for a change,
she was in the
>hot seat. "Well... I'm hoping that I get a place on the Explorer,

maybe as one of the alternate pilots if I'm lucky, but...well,

>with my flying marks, probably not. I may try for a

communications post instead."
> "Maybe you should try for intelligence," Mira laughed. "Or

Journalism. I swear, it seems like nothing goes on around here

>without you knowing about it."
 Dawn smiled. "Maybe. What about
you Lisa..."
> + + + +
 "...What do you want to do after graduation?"
> Hunk thought about Pidge's question a moment.
 "Explorer," he
said. "I think I'm going to try for the
>Explorer."
 "Why?"
> He shrugged, "'Cause it's the best ship we can apply for.
You
know, I'm the first Sullivan to make it into the Space
>Academy. Gotta set a good example for David and Lilly and little

Andy so they'll do good if they want to follow their big brother.

>And... I think it'd make Mom happy."
 "Whoah, Hunk," said Boyd.
"Never saw you for a Momma's
>Boy."
 "And proud of it," Hunk answered back, "Got a problem
with
>that?"
 "Oh this ought to be good," murmured Lance, settling in
to
>see what Boyd would do. For once, Boyd didn't press the issue.

"No offense Hunk, man," he said. "Just...you know...Want
>some chips?"
 Hunk took the bag Boyd held out at arm's length
and settled
>back against the bed, looking mildly triumphant. After taking out

a handful, he passed it to Rocky and said "Okay Boyd, what do YOU

>want to do?"
 "That's easy! Spend all day on some tropical
climate
>surrounded by beautiful women who want me for my bod, test out

new luxury items, and get paid for it too. But I'll probably end

>up a jet jockey someplace for my tour. I mean, come on, let's

face it, with all the brain trusts walking around here, I don't

>stand a chance at an Explorer post. Even after hanging out with

you guys. Besides, they'd kick me out in a week I'd bet ya',

>even if I did get the post."
 "Gee, can you be a little more
positive?" remarked Lance
>sarcastically
 "Hey! Nobody back home thought I'd make it this
far. So,
>once my tour is over, I am going back home and showing all of

them that Boyd Carter DID graduate the Space Academy and I am

>going to take my diploma and shove it in their face and see what

they think of THAT!"
> "And then what?" asked Rocky.
 "Then... I'll probably have to
go looking for a job, but
>that's a long way off; I don't think that far ahead. All right,

I'm done, who's next?"
> + + + +
 "I'll go," said Cinda. "I want to be on the Explorer
too,
>because its going far away."
 "Say what?" said Lauren.
> Cinda seemed to be hunting for the words. "The Explorer
is...
it is traveling very far away from the Alliance to find
>more planets like yours and mine. I would like to be there to

see those worlds. This world is so different from my own, and

>I've learned so much... and I wonder what other worlds and people

are out far away, and what are they like and what else I can

>learn when I'm there."
 "Wow!"
> "Cinda, that's cool!"
 "Good luck Cinda!"
> "That is so neat."
 "How about you, Ginger. You going to try
for the Explorer?"
> Ginger shifted uncomfortably in her niche amid her
collection
of stuffed animals.
> "I do. I have to get a post on there. If I don't get a post
on
the Explorer, I don't think I ever want to go home again."
> Lisa stared at Ginger. "Why is that?"
 "My brothers," said
Ginger. "You have no idea what it's like
>having two older brothers... They acted like they had to take

care of me all the time! Just once I want to prove to them that

>I'm not some helpless little girl, like they always treat me

like. I can do things on my own without them trying to protect me

>all the time! Do you know that they tried to talk me out of the

Academy? They said they were afraid it wasn't for me and that I

>wouldn't like it, but what they really meant was they didn't

think I could do it! Like I'm still some kind of...child!"
> The room sat in stunned silence; none of them, not even Mira

had, ever seen her this emotional about anything. Ginger seemed

>to realize this, looking into their stunned faces. She seemed to

withdraw before she continued.
> "Maybe... I'm exaggerating a little bit... it's... it's not

really THAT bad... I..."
> "It's okay Ginger," said Lisa, getting up and sitting down

beside her. "We just... umm..."
> "We never knew you cared so much about it," finished Lauren.

The others nodded in agreement.
> "Oh... I'm sorry-"
 "Don't apologize!" Lauren told her. "You
should try for it!"
>I've got an older brother too, and know how they can be if you

let them get to you. You'll show 'em."
> "...I hope so."
 "You will," reassured Lisa, patting her on the
shoulder.
>"I'm sure of it; you're going to have a position on the Explorer

after graduation. Trust me, you're going to do fine."
> "Well, none of us are going to do fine," Mira cut in,
holding
up a study guide...
> + + + +
 "...If we don't get back to work."

> "Pidge, you are no fun," Boyd complained.
 "But he's right," said Cliff. "That test is going to be a
>killer. Does anyone remember where we were before we stopped?"
 Rocky skimmed the notebook in front of him. "Chapter 14, I
>think. 'The New Colonies'."
 "First question," said Pidge. "Which colony-"
> There was a weak knock at the door.
 "C'min!" Boyd called (even though it wasn't his room).
> The door opened and to everyone's surprised, Keith stepped
in.

> He looked different somehow, that much was obvious to all of

them, even Boyd. Keith was never extremely emotional, but right
>then, he seemed like an emotional black hole.
 "Are you guys still studying?" he asked. Lance thought he
>sounded empty.
 "Yeah... sure. Come on in."
> He came in and sat down on the edge of one of the beds
bringing with him an almost visible aura of black.
> "Keith, you okay?" Lance asked.
 "I'm fine," Keith said quietly. He obviously was not fine.
> "Hey, how did thing go with you and-" Boyd started to ask

before Keith cut him off.
> "Have you covered the formation of the Galaxy Alliance yet?
 "Uh... Not yet, " said Pidge. "We're still on the new
>colonies."
 "Want some pizza," asked Hunk, offering him the box that
>still contained two skinny slices. "It's cold but it's still

good."
> Keith shook his head and pushed away the box.
 "Keith, what happened to your hand?!"
> Rocky was staring at Keith's hand he'd used to push away the

box. The palm was covered in small scabs and smears that looked
>like dried blood. Through the red-brown streaks, there were

small red sores scattered over the skin.
> Keith withdrew his hand. "It's nothing."
 "Okay, that's it!" announced Lance as he stood up. "Guys, I
>think it's time you relocated. You too Cliff. Try Hunk's room,

that should work. Keith and I need to have a talk. NOW."
> "Lance... " Keith began.
 "You, stay put. Guys?"
> "We got it," said Cliff as he and the others started
gathering their things. "C'mon mates. Let's go."
> As soon as the books and extra food had been gathered, the

cadets filed quietly out of the room, leaving Keith and Lance
>behind and started the trek to Hunk and Pidge's room.
 "What do you think happened?" Hunk asked Pidge. "Keith
>looks really bummed. And his hand.."
 "Who knows? But it'll probably be all over the campus
>tomorrow."
 "Bet it has something to do with that thing he planned with
>Emily," Rocky said.
 "But the blood?"
> "...I don't think I want to think about it."
 "Hope he's okay," said Cliff.
> "Hey, you'd better hope he doesn't destroy your room. The
state he's in-"
> "Shut up Boyd."
 + + + +
> Keith had not moved from his seat on the edge of the bed,

slouched over, arms resting on his knees. He didn't look up,

>even when Lance knelt down in front of him, trying to make eye

contact.
> "Keith, are you going to tell me what happened?"
 "Nothing
happened," Keith said in a voice so controlled it
>sounded distant.
 "Don't give me the 'good little stoic soldier'
act, Keith.
>SOMETHing happened!"
 His friend didn't reply.
> "Look at your hand, and tell me again nothing happened."
 Keith
turned his hand over and looked at the dried blood
>smears that covered his palm.
 "Well?" demanded Lance.
> "It's my blood."
 Lance bit back a quick retort and took a deep
breath. "...And
>WHY is your hand covered in your blood."
 "Thorns. I had roses."

> "For Emily," said Lance, his voice had noticeably softened.

Keith nodded.
> Lance sat down next to him. "So what happened?"
 "...I went
over to see her. I was going to tell her I was
>signing on the Blackmoor with her after graduation..."
 "You..?
No, just go on. What did she say."
> "I knocked," Keith continued almost emotionlessly. "She

answered the door, and... there was someone else in the room.

>Some guy..."
 "Oh God," Lance breathed.
> "...So I didn't tell her. She told me that she didn't think we

were serious, and she wants to talk about it tomorrow-"
> "HA!"
 Keith's head jerked up at the interruption.
> "I don't believe this!" Lance ranted. "I can NOT believe
this!"

> "It's the truth," Keith said simply, still sounding too
calm.

> "Keith! Blast it... I believe you, I believe everything you

said!"
> "Then why are you getting upset."
 "Because that slut hurt my
best friend!"
> "She is not..." Keith began.
 "Keith, you just said you caught
her with another guy! Was
>she sorry?"
 No answer.
> "Did she say she was sorry? Did she make up an excuse? Did
she
say ANYTHING?"
> He could see Keith was trying to turn away, but he couldn't
let
him.
> "No!" Lance kept going. "I didn't think so! That's because

Emily is an A-number-one, first class SLUT and you..."
> "I'm what," Keith said in a voice that was both cold and
dead.

> Some of Lance's rage ebbed. "... and you were too good a
person
to see that she's beyond hope."
> "You mean I'm a naive idiot."
 "I DID NOT SAY THAT! I didn't
even THINK it Keith!" He
>paused to massage his forehead. " Damn! I wish Sven was here. At

least he could probably talk some sense into you."
> "You tried to warn me. You said-"
 "That's because I'm a
suspicious, paranoid jerk! How was I
>supposed to know I was right for once?"
 Lance sat down across
from him on the other bed. "Look,
>I've known you a long time. And as long as I've known you,

you've always seen the good side in people, while I usually see
>the bad. You must have seen something in her, maybe something

she doesn't even know she has. And you care about things, REALLY

>care about things, which is more than I can say for a lot of

people. So... you made a bad call, but that's no reason to..."

>he grabbed Keith's injured hand, " to do THIS to yourself."

Keith yanked his hand back.

> "I know it hurts inside, but she is not worth that kind of

pain, Keith" he said bluntly. "Do not let her keep torturing you

>like this... C'mon Keith... Say something."
 Keith seemed to sag
even more. Slowly, he said in a low,
>quiet voice, "I can't feel anything."
 "I know," said Lance.

> "There's nothing left."
 "Now, maybe. But not always. There's
always later."

> "I don't ever want this ever, ever... It's not worth it."
 "It
will be. One day."

> "No."
 "...Keith, you know... if you want to... It's... it's
okay

>to cry."
 "I don't think I can."

> Lance tried to think of something to say, but couldn't think
of
a word.

> The seconds ticked by.
 He looked at his clock on the wall.

"Look, you want to head

>back to your room? Sven should be back from Tai Chi and he's

always been better with advice than I am."

> His friend gave a weak shrug.
 "Here," said Lance, offering
Keith his hand. "Come on, I'll

>walk you home."
 Keith looked up; his eyes were red and tired,
and he looked

>completely drained of life. He let Lance help him to his feet,

and the two walked out, pausing only to turn off the lights

>behind them.
 + + + +

> "The Galaxy Alliance was proposed by... the Arusian Stellar

Alliance, the Commonwealth of Terran Planets, and... the...

>Federation of Free Colonies!"
 "Bravo, Lisa!" Mira applauded.
"You're on fire tonight!"

> Lisa smiled. "I've been studying so hard for this one, I
want
to ace it so bad."

> "Okay next question... when-"
 Mira was interrupted by a sharp
buzz.

> "I'll get it," said Ginger, grabbing a receiver from her

nightstand.

> "Hello...? Just a second... Mira, it's for you. It's Laaa-nce."

She passed the handset past the leering girls to her

>roommate. Mira glared at them in mock anger, then spoke into the

receiver.

> "Hey Lance, what's up?"
 There was a long pause, and Mira's
expression changed. She

>was no longer smiling. Her hand drifted instinctively to her

lips as her jaw dropped.

> "Are you serious?" she asked in a low voice.
 There was another
long pause; everyone was starting to look

>concerned.
 "Oh my..." she breathed, " How is... Okay.... Okay,
yeah...

>I see. I'll meet you there...okay. Bye."
 She tossed the handset
back to Ginger and started to yank on

>her shoes. "Guys, better finish without me. I gotta go."
 "What happened?" asked Lisa.

> "I can't say, it's... I'll tell you later. I think it's
mostly over now. Least, I hope so," she added quietly before she

>grabbed her keys and headed out the door.
 + + + +

> "Okay guys, find a spot," Hunk said as the study group filed
into the dormroom he shared with Pidge.

> "And Boyd, don't touch my goldfish," said Pidge, glaring at
the tattooed cadet.

> "Man, you are never going to let me forget that, are you?"
 "No, I'm not."

> Rocky claimed the red beanbag chair near the foot of the
bed. "Okay, I'm ready! Let's get started before I forget

>everything again."
 "Hold it, I just want to check something on the vid real

>quick," said Boyd as he leaned towards Hunk's viewer.
 "Oh no. Boyd, we don't have time to watch jetball," Cliff

>insisted, " We have this thing called a 'Final Exam' to worry
about?"

> "We've got plenty of time, I just want to see what the
scores are."

> Boyd reached across them and turned on the vidscreen. It
looked like the beginning of the fourth quarter but there were no

>scores displayed yet. The teams were lining up for their next
play and...

> "We interrupt this program for a breaking news story..."
 "WHAT THE HECK!" Boyd yelped. "THIS IS THE PLAYOFFS!!"

> "...the year old peace treaty with the Doom Empire has been
broken with the Forces from the Planet Doom making an unprovoked

>attack against Planet Nemon." the announcer continued. "Reports
are still coming in, and details are still sketchy..."

> "Oh my God," Cliff breathed. The others were silent, but
the feeling of disbelief was shared by all of them.

> + + + +
 "Okay, here's a tough one. What year did the Galaxy

>Alliance OFFICIALLY form? Cinda?"
 Cinda's answer to Lisa's question was cut short by a quick

>rapping on the door.
 "It's open!" Ginger called.

> One of their dormmates, a girl named Katherine, poked her
head inside.

> "Turn on your vids! You're not going to believe this!"
 "What?"

> "Doom broke the peace!"
 Ginger reached over and turned on the vidscreen. The whole

>room watched as the announcer faded into view.
 "...still do not have an accurate figure on casualties, but

>early reports look to be in the high hundreds. Representatives
of the Doom Empire are claiming that this was in response to

>repeated threats and terrorist activity directed at them from
Planet Nemon, but as there is little evidence to support this

>claim at this time, many leaders are making public statements
that they believe this to be a ruse by Planet Doom to hide their

>true motives for attack. Negotiations with representative from
Planet Doom are occurring at various embassies galaxywide even as

>we speak. Repeating once again, the year old peace treaty with

the Doom Empire has been broken with the Forces from the Planet

>Doom making an unprovoked attack against Planet Nemon..."
 "Does this mean there's going to be a war?" Ginger asked.

> "I don't know, Ging," Dawn answered in a low voice. "I
really don't know."

> The report continued as a worried hush fell over the
Academy, nearly every eye glued to various vidscreens as the

>future was being reshaped.
 + + + +

> There was a small atrium towards the center of the Space
Academy campus with a simple fountain set in its center. The

>fountain only ran in the daytime, which meant the surface of the
fountain basin was perfectly calm, reflecting the stars overhead

>like a small fragment of a second sky.
 Lance sat down on the rim of the fountain, his thoughts far

>away. He didn't snap back into focus until he heard approaching
footsteps on the nearby grass.

> "Hi," said Mira.
 "Hi." he said.

> "How's he doing?"
 He shrugged. "He's hurting pretty bad. I walked him back

>to his room. Sven was there, so he can help him better than I
can."

> She sat down next to him on the basin. "Did he say what
happened exactly?"

> "He doesn't want to talk about it. All I know was that he
went over to Emily's and caught her with another guy."

> "Oh man..."
 "Near as I can tell, she treated him pretty bad. I know she

>told him that they weren't serious."
 "I don't think she knows the meaning of the word. She's

>such a slut."
 "That's what I told him, and he was still ready to defend

>her."
 "Oh, poor guy."

> "Did you know he was ready to dump a guaranteed spot in the
Explorer to sign onto the Blackmoor, just so he could be near

>her."
 "You're kidding!"

> "Nope. He was ready to throw away everything for her, and
she goes and does this to him."

> Mira put her hand on his shoulder. "How are you taking it?"
 Lance gave an uncommittal grunt. "I'm okay. Just hate

>seeing him like this."
 "I know."

> There was an uncomfortable quiet as both tried to think of a
way to change the subject.

> "So, you ready for tomorrow's history final?" Mira said at
last.

> "Think so. If they don't to much on settlement dates, I
should ace it."

> "I know. There's so many of them to remember. Like we're
ever going to need to know what year Planet Telos was colonized

>ever again."
 "Unless we get on a game show," Lance grinned and hopped off

>his perch. "Mira Astrii, for fifty thousand credits, what was
the year that Planet Titus was colonized!"

> Mira gave him a playful shove. "Oh stop that!"
 He smiled, obviously feeling better.

> "Hard to believe it's almost over."
 "No kidding. Next stop," she said dramatically, "bum bum

>BUM.. the REAL world!"
 "Have you decided where you want to go?"

> "I'm still kinda torn between Balto or Torres. May go with

Balto; I've heard Pidge and Chip talk about it and it sounds

>nice. Professor Gast thinks I may be able to qualify for an

officer's position."

> "Congratulations."
 "Thanks. You still applying for the
Explorer?"

> Lance nodded. "Hey, they're going to need someone out there

with good looks, charm, and a lucky rabbit's foot."

> "So where are they going to get the good looks and charm?"

"Hey!" he retorted.

> Mira laughed. "I'm kidding!"
 "No you're not. But, I'm far too
charming to let that it

>bother me."
 "Oh puh-LEASE! To think I thought I was going to
miss you!"

> They laughed.
 "Well," she admitted at last. "I am going to
miss you."

> "I'll miss you too."
 "But we're going to be so far away..."

> "...Communication would be rough..."
 "...I'm glad we tied up
loose ends already."

> "Me too."
 "Good."

> "Mm-hm."
 Another awkward pause.

> "Ready to protect Balto from the forces of Evil?" he said

jokingly.

> "Hmm.. Maybe. Ready to boldly go where no man has-"
 "Do you
have any idea how old that is?" he cringed.

> She thought a moment. "No... but I guess some things never

die."

> "Uh-huh," he said looking at her. "Some things never do."

"...True," she said, gazing back at him.

> They sat under the clear night sky on the silent campus,

unaware of the news report that blared in every room. Things

>were changing around them, would be changing around them as the

tests were taken, positions evaluated and assigned, and people

>moved on. Everything felt like it was in flux, but for that

moment, it didn't matter.

> The campus clock struck twelve.
 It was tomorrow.

> <p>

The End

> <p>

see more at <http://www.stkp.com/V4/>

> <p>

End
file.